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True Love, Jellyfish, and Theoretical Physics



romance

when-did-this-get-on-editor's-choice-not-that-i'm-complaining-but-it's-super-old-and-only-needs-one-more-chapter-and-i-honestly-thought-that-it-would-just-never-be-completed-this-is-a-huge-surprise-honestly

👁 564 ✓ 47 ★ 44 🏆

Chapter 1 by R

I'd never fallen in love before that day. Even the idea of love was foreign, something out of a storybook, not something that would ever happen to me.

Still, it happens. I suppose that love works like that. Not that I'd know.

This, this is how it began, a summer day on a windswept beach where I met the person who I loved, who had the most interesting mind and the beautiful heart that the world had ever seen.

This is how I met Alex.

Chapter 2 by romantiCaveman



First things first, I hate trips to the beach.

It's not terrible if I cover up and bring a book, but otherwise I'm bored to tears and spend the next few weeks sunburnt. Still, the weather is perfect. Everywhere, people are obnoxious, and quite frankly, I don't like them.

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The big thing, though, is that I can never get comfortable swimming. I don't get the excitement of waves and also have never quite gotten over a childhood incident and subsequent phobia of the ocean, which if you'll forgive me, I rather not talk about.

But I had to get out of my cousin's beach house, so I walked along the beach. I saw a beached jellyfish and was about to avert my eyes and made a wide detour around it, until I did a double take.

It wasn't a jellyfish.

It was a pink swim top.

Chapter 3 by Kaitlyn Boroska



My eyes trailed out into the ocean, squinting so I could see farther into the distance. Confused, I tilted my head questionably at the figure bobbing in the distance. With a jolt, I realized it was a person. Noticing me, the person began waving one arm frantically in the air, trying desperately to catch my attention.

"Hey!" The person shouted at the top of their lungs. "Can you bring me my swim top, please? I've been out here for about an hour. I look like a dried up prune!"

A small smile danced across my face, a giggle coming out of my mouth against my will. "Sure, I..." I began quietly, trailing off as I bent down to pick up the top and dust the sand away. My phobia of the ocean. I never thought that I might actually have to confront it, and certainly not today. "I don't know if I can!" I shouted back apologetically, my voice shaking slightly.

"What? You can't?" She yelled, confused. I stared at my feet, not able to think of an appropriate excuse as to why I couldn't help her. "Please, I'm exhausted!" She called eventually, sounding exactly as tired as she claimed to be.

With a slight sigh, I glanced up and squinted in her direction again. Clutching the top in my hand,

I took a step into the ocean, my heart beating out of my chest.

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Chapter 4 by Intelikat

"Wait! Wait!" The girl shouted.

I froze up to my shins.

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"I need you to do something for me."

"Beside from bringing you this?" I called out, holding the swim top aloft.

"I'm sorry. Forgive me if this sounds strange," she said. "But I need you... to take off your bottoms."

"Yeah. Yeah. That does sound a bit strange."

"It's just that I'm out here, topless. You're a stranger. And... well, I'd feel a whole lot better if you were naked too."

"Really?" I shouted. "It's not going to make you more uncomfortable if I'm carrying a swim top out to you naked?"

I looked around. The length of the beach was fairly deserted, with only a few sunbathers in the distance.

"Look... I... I'm not really comfortable in the water," I added.

"Well, this will help you."

"How so?"

"Are you ashamed of your body?" she asked.

"What? No...! No, of course not."

"What is it then?"

I had waded in a bit deeper so that the water was up to my belly now. I knew I was going to have to get the top to her one way or another. Perhaps I could get within range and throw it.

"Just... something that happened what I was a kid!"

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"You're afraid of the ocean?"

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"Yeah!"

"Hmm. Well. I'm afraid the discovery of the Higgs boson may signal the end of the universe and human existence, but that doesn't keep me from getting on with it."

"Huh?"

"Nevermind. You're not a physicist, are you."

"No."

"Thank god."

I took a deep breath and slipped off my shorts below the waterline. I was now holding her top and my bottoms in one hand. I began to move toward her, hoping the gentle waves would not crest and then drop below the current level, exposing my body to this girl.

"Well, you're doing great," she said.

"At what? Oh."

"Just focus on me."

I was within about 8 meters of her now, and could see her much more clearly. Her porcelain-skinned arms were covering her small chest, and a shock of dark hair was blown around her face. She looked a bit of a mess, in truth.

"Well. Come here."

I lifted the pink swim top to her.

"Come closer, stupid." She smiled. "I'm not going to reach out for it like this."

Awkwardly, I half-turned back to the beach and toed closer to her. I could feel the smooth sand on the ocean floor below, and I could feel the wind rise and fall. The sun was warm on my dry

back, which was still above the water.

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I suddenly realized how far out I really was. At least, I didn't remember ever having

come this far in the water. I was still there in the distance, oblivious to what was happening.

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"Okay."

I turned.

"Thank you."

She was wearing the top now, and her arms were freed. A bright smile was splashed across her face and her eyes were squinted against the bright sun, surrounded by toasty freckles. She looked... asian? Or Italian? Or some combination? I couldn't tell.

"I'm Alex," she said.

"Tom," I replied.

And to tell you the truth, I don't remember what we talked about for the next few hours. Even now.

I remember we splashed about in the water a bit longer. She was a bit of a tease. And then we returned to the beach and her towel, which we shared. I remember a tattered copy of Kerouac lying beside the highest level SPF sunscreen I'd ever seen. I think I joked about it. And about Kerouac.

We grew hungry as the sun dipped lower, and we found we both had nothing better to do than to eat together at a pub near the beach, and then drink together, and when the time came I casually invited her back to my cousin's beach house (who was away for the weekend). I said it in such a way that if she refused, the rejection would be blunted by my non-committal way of joking about it, but when she paused and responded simply by taking my hand, I felt as if I was in the ocean again... my heart pounding and the waves at once terrifying.

I paid the bill and we disappeared into the night, headed back across the sand.

Chapter 5 by Laura Frost



We talked, that night. About anything and everything. It was the kind of conversation that went in a thousand different directions. See more of Story Wars

next, I didn't even know how much time had passed, until she told me to rise.

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Alex starts to sing, "Good morning, good morning, we talked the whole night through..."

"I love that movie," I say.

"Same." A brief look of disappointment flashes across her face. "I'm sorry. I have to go now, I have class."

"It's okay." I grab a sticky note from the kitchen counter and scribble my cell number on it.

"Here. If you...want to talk again. Or meet up again."

"Thanks." She takes it. "Do you want to get coffee sometime? Maybe tomorrow? I don't have anything going on."

I already can't wait for tomorrow. "Yes. I'd love to."

"Awesome." We've made it to the door. She departs in silence, and waves from the driveway. I wave back. She smiles, and not to long after, she is gone. It's only then that I realize how tired I am.

I head upstairs, and for the first time in years, dream about the ocean without being afraid.

Chapter 6 by -



One of the MCs is dying of an incurable disease, dun dun dunnnnn

I wake up the next morning, bright and early. I take a nice warm shower and throw on a little bit of cologne. I do my hair nice and neat, and put on my favorite shirt and shorts. I go to the coffee shop down the street and order myself a chai tea. I've never been one for coffee, but I like tea!

I sit for a while, thinking Alex has blown me off, when I notice a girl who looks like Alex sitting in the corner booth. Oh my gosh! It is Alex! I quickly walk over and apologize for being late.

"I didn't see you over here!" I say as I walk up.

"Haha. It's okay. I didn't see you over *there*!" She responds. Whew! I guess that was lucky. We talk for a while, getting to know each other better when I ask her to come to the beach. I just

have this crazy feeling like I want to go in the ocean again. I know! I know! I shouldn't feel like this if I'm afraid of the ocean, but

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"Sure! I'd love to!" Alex just smiles. "I was planning on going there right after this." Oh. I don't. That means I'll have to bring her back to my

cousin's house before going to the beach.

"Well... I.... Um..." I stutter. "You can come over again for a couple minutes while I change..." I offer.

"Sure!" Alex responds, not thinking anything is wrong. But then the realization crosses her face. My cousin's beach house only has one room and a bathroom. It is very small and it would be uncomfortable if I changed in front of her. Or would it? No! NO! NOOO! I don't want to be thinking like that! I'm trying to be a gentleman here!

"Or you could meet me there...?" I say with a half smile.

"No. It's okay. You're cousin's beach house is literally *on* the beach! I can wait outside or something..." She flashes a sly smile and I instantly fall for her. I give her a sly smile back and we head off to my cousin's house.

When we're there, Alex asks if she should wait outside, but I invite her in, and she comes without hesitating.

"To tell you the truth," Alex starts, "I already saw your stuff..." She gives me a glance, and my face starts to burn and go pale at the same time. This always happens when I'm embarrassed. You see, I have an incurable disease that makes my blood pressure drop deathly when I get too embarrassed. But I don't know how to tell Alex this!

"Ohmygosh!" Alex looks at me with a concerned look. "You're getting really pale. Do you need a drink?" She asks politely, obviously not knowing what to do in this situation. I sit down and slowly move my head back and forth.

"I just have this... um... disease..." I start to explain.

Chapter 7 by Fanwizard



Alex's mouth opened, but no words came out.

"W-what?" Alex's voice is soft. "You mean..."

"I'm dying. And there's no way to stop it."

I'd never said those words before.

A few weeks. Eventually, probably a few months.

memories.

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I would be dead within a

few weeks. Eventually, probably a few months.

memories.

"Oh, Tom, sweetie," Alex gently touches my cheek with the palm of her hands. I almost flinch, but her hand is surprisingly gentle and soft. "I don't know what to say."

We're silent for a few minutes. I wonder what Alex is thinking, because I know what I'm thinking. How did the girl I met yesterday, the one that I brought a pink swim top to in the ocean, be the one I suddenly tell my deepest secret to?

Soon, it won't be a secret how I died. People will muse about how sad it was that Thomas Schreave died so young, but really, most of the people at my funeral will have barely known me. I wasn't exactly a popular guy.

I'd known that I would never live too long, but it didn't stop me from thinking about a girlfriend, maybe eventually marriage, children, and growing old with the person I loved if a miracle happened.

But who would want to date a dying guy?

No miracles seem to be coming my way anytime soon. The best I could hope for, to be realistic, is another week at the most added to the time between now and my expiration date. Two weeks if I'm lucky.

Finally, I break under all my thoughts, and jump back to the present too fast.

I take the hand that Alex has on my cheek in my own hand, and press my lips against hers gently.

Chapter 8 by Fanwizard



Alex almost immediately kisses me back. Her fingers become tangled in my hair. I try to remember whether or not I brushed my hair this morning, but I can't.

I slide my hands to the small of Alex's back. When was the last time I kissed a girl like this? Then, I remember.

Before I had been diagnosed. Before I had forced myself not to get too attached to anyone, because I'd end up hurting them in the end.

Stop it, Tom, I chided myself. Stop focusing on that.

Alex pulls back, and studies my eyes. Hers remind me of chocolate, warm and the absolute perfect shade of brown, but with an outer lining of amber, which catches the light and turns her eyes golden.

Alex, my throat seems tight.

"How much time do you have left?"

"Three weeks."

Alex's chocolate eyes soft.

"Of dying?"

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Alex nodded, but doesn't say anything.

"No, I'm not. I think it would be silly to fear death, since everyone will eventually die."

"How long have you known?"

"For a while now. I spent three years in a hospital, stabbed and poisoned by doctors, but finally put an end to it. They weren't helping, just delaying my death. I'd rather live a short, free life, than live a miserable, long life stuck in a hospital."

Alex closes her eyes. "I really don't know why it matters so much to me, that you're going to die in twenty-one days. If not for yesterday, you would have been another stranger to me."

"You can thank jellyfish and your top. Otherwise, another handsome and charming guy would have brought you your top."

Alex smiles faintly, but it doesn't reach her eyes. "I don't believe in true love at first sight."

"I don't either," I admit.

Suddenly, I felt faint. The world seemed to spin and shrink, then expand. I collapsed.

"Tom! Tom?" Alex lunged to catch me from hitting the floor. Her voice seemed to be everywhere, then nowhere at the same time. "Omigod! Tom?"

Three weeks too early. It was happening. Right now, far away from all of my family. Not really having a chance to say goodbye.

"Don't call 911," I blindly reach for Alex's hand, but manage to find it. "I'm not going back to that hospital. I can't go back. Please."

Alex hesitated. "You wanna die?"

"No one wants to die. But it's best for everyone." My eyelids began to feel heavy, my throat closing in on itself.

"Tom, please."

"It's not their fault," I murmured. "It's not your fault."

"I-I-I," Alex seemed at a loss for words.

"Alex, it's going to be okay."

"Is it?" Alex said softly, squeezing my hand. I could feel my heart beginning to slow.

"Yes. It is."

My eyes closed. I was starting to slip away.

"I love you," Alex said quietly. "I love you."

"I love you, too." I don't know if Alex said it or if I said it, but she did. Alex leaned over and pressed her lips against mine the last time before I slipped away completely.

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